

MINUTES



ACT BUSHFIRE COUNCIL (BFC)

1 September 2010

ACTRFS HEADQUARTERS

4 POINT COOK AVENUE

FAIRBAIRN ACT

Wednesday 1 September 2010

AGENDA

- 1. Opening and Introduction by Chairman**
- 2. Attendees/ Apologies**
- 3. Minutes of previous meeting**
- 4. Actions running sheet**
- 5. Correspondence**
 - Incoming
 - Outgoing
- 6. Agenda Items**
- 7. Other Business**
- 8. Outstanding Items/Issues**
- 9. Confirmation of next meeting**

AGENDA ITEM: 1 – 5

DATE: 1 September 2010 1600-1900Hrs

LOCATION: ASOC Fairbairn

Meeting Opened Time: 1612 Close: 1854

1. Welcome by Chairman

Kevin Jeffery opened the meeting at 1612

2. Attendees/Apologies:

Kevin Jeffery	(KJ) Chair / Member
Michael Lonergan	(MIL) Member
Marion Leiba	(ML) Member
Christine Goonrey	(CG) Member
Tony Fearnside	(TF) Member
Neil Cooper	(NC) Ex-officio ACT Parks Conservation and Land Management
Andrew Stark	(AS) Ex-officio RFS Chief Officer Executive Officer to BFC
Michael Joyce	(MJ) Ex-officio RFS Governance and Compliance
Melissa Peters	(MP) Secretariat

Apologies:

Cathy Parsons	(CP) Member
Tony Bartlett	(TB) Deputy Chair / Member
Simon Katz	(SK) Member

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting:

Minutes of the 11 August 2010 meeting tabled.

Amendments to the August Minutes

A number of changes were suggested by members to the August as follows:

MIL noted that the SWERS discussion needed to be added. It needs to be in the minutes that SWERS do not exist in the ACT (as far as Council members understand), but may exist in NSW areas to the north and west of Canberra where fires may originate to threaten the ACT. MIL also mentioned that the age of powerlines, poles and cross arms (which could break off) were discussed in the previous meeting.

MIL noted that in Safety Policy and Education (Recommendation 1) and Fire Resistant Gardens (Recommendation 44) the minutes should mention who they are talking too. For example, fire resistant gardens are particularly appropriate in the ember zone, Duffy for example, but not particular to areas such as Braddon and Turner etc. The minutes should reflect that the education should be primarily targeted at residents of rural areas and ember zones. The minutes should also reflect that the Council supports the Fact Sheet being distributed to everyone, as, you could be in a fire zone this year but not the next, good for general knowledge.

Motion to accept the August 2010 Minutes with the proposed changes included was moved by ML, seconded by CG, and accepted.

Business Arising from the August Minutes

In regard to the SWERS discussion, MIL noted that possibly the Minister could check with ActewAGL in relation to the impact on the North – North/West side of ACT. It was accepted that if Council asked Minister to do this, Minister would most likely ask ACTRFS to perform this duty. Members thought that it is not up to the Council to know this information; it is up to the Council to inform the Minister as per correspondence from Tony Bartlett.

A concern was raised about Recommendation 58, due to the 20 positions that were proposed to be ceased within Territory and Municipal Services (TAMS). Council was informed that because of external pressure this has now been delayed for 6 months. Council will continue to monitor the TAMS fire staffing levels.

TAMS noted that they have had a staff member attend a meeting in relation to the emphasis on recommendations from the VBRC that had been picked and what hadn't. Discussions were held about the process undertaken during the Bushfire Council Recommendations-Review undertaken by Bob Smith, and the need to review the situation within the ACT using the process devised by that consultant.

Council had a discussion regarding the process for Council monitoring and reporting on the status of the implementation of recommendations. It was suggested that there is a 2 part process – the Council (Bob Smith) review that RFS and TAMS participated in now needs to have the mechanism for ongoing monitoring to be the consistent reporting tool. The VBRC recommendations could be included to ensure that ACT Agencies are in line with or are meeting the definitions of the recommendations, (and not just simply the Agencies definition of whether they are meeting the recommendation).

Council discussed the benefits of having an independent consultant spending time to review. It was agreed that Council members would be unlikely to find the time required do this ourselves. **MIL** spoke of Bob Smith's process as a review machine that keeps everyone accountable, and that we need to bring the review machine up to date, feed the Victorian recommendations that we think apply/are relevant to the ACT, into the system to then be able to consistently monitor the implementation. It was discussed that as part of the recommendations to the Minister we should be suggesting that we review these at a point in the future based on the model that Bob Smith put in place (monitoring model) and ensuring that we are implementing what we said we will.

AS noted that the RFS has consolidated all of the recommendations from the Doogan Coronial, the McLeod Report, the BFC Implementation Report (Bob Smith) and the Victorian Bushfire Royal Commission, and also the outcomes from the reports on the incident relating to David Balfour's death into one document which the Council can use as a basis for the ongoing reporting of the implementation of those agreed recommendations.

Discussion was held as to the better process for Council undertaking an ongoing review of the implementation of recommendations. Options discussed included the agencies providing a report for Council to review in detail, the use of a consultant or independent expert auditor, or a hybrid of these approaches that utilises two steps as necessary. Council members had a preference for the hybrid approach, and recommended that we make a recommendation to the Minister to identify resources required for that process.

4. Actions Running Sheet:

There are no outstanding actions from the previous meeting.

Current Actions:

1. **Chair** to write to Minister regarding the recommendations and advise that the Council takes a long term view of this report and recommend that Council provides an implementation status report at a later date.
 2. **Members** recommend that a 5th dot point is added to Recommendation 1 – Particular focus on rural areas/ember zones.
 3. Chair will to notify Minister regarding the following – We suggest a reviewing process that involves the relevant agencies providing reports based on all recommendations, including the VBRC and previous two relevant reports, based on the Bob Smith risk management framework, once completed and reviewed and our audit done. Council will potentially identify focused areas where we might need a consultant to go into further detail.
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5. Correspondence

Incoming:

Letter from Minister received stating he had actioned the concerns regarding Planning approvals for BOP activities has highlighted by the Mt Franklin Road project.

TAMS BOP report tabled.

Outgoing:

Nil

Action:

AS to chair working group meeting. First meeting approximately 28th September. CEOs of other agencies to attend.

6. SUBJECT: Update on 2009/2010 BOP Implementation

NC presented a summary of the implementation of the 2009/2010 BOP.

Discussion was held around the “access” activities on the BOP, and the planning issues were identified in further detail.

Some areas required specific explanation. An example of this is that the report states that the hazard reduction burn was at 88% complete, but PCL completed 3234ha out of 3244ha of prescribed burning. The 88% complete is related to the number of burns, and there were 2 burns totalling 10ha that were not completed. Council was also informed that the BOP stated that they would complete 10 burns, where in fact they completed 15, thus have undertaken activities in addition to those in the BOP where they were available and consistent with the longer term plans. Council agreed that this was a valid and useful way of undertaking burning. Council members offered a number of suggestions to NC in order to make reporting simpler and in some areas to improve the usefulness of reporting.

The BOP Report was split into seven sections, and in summary 96% of works were either completed or commenced, with an additional 45 extra tasks completed on top of those originally planned.

Council asked for further information regarding the grazing activities. NC noted that contracts are currently being let, and that there had been issues with that. Licences have been let and hopefully they will let cattle in soon. It was confirmed that where grazing was stated as 100% it means that they grazed all of the areas they said they were going to graze. It was noted that some areas did not meet the standards, and to correct it some cattle were moved around, and now all areas meet the requirement. In order to meet the fire protection requirements PCL direct as to where cattle should graze, when to move in or out.

AS asked about the slash on the parkway and what is happening with that. **NC** stated that the plan is for nothing to be done with it, and in two years time it will have rotted away and there will be no fuel. The view is that they have not increased the fuel but in fact they have decreased the fuel availability, and have redistributed to ground level.

Council thanked Mr Cooper for the comprehensive report.

Action:

Nil

DRAFT

AGENDA ITEM: 7

SUBJECT: Other Business

Nil

AGENDA ITEM: 8

SUBJECT: Outstanding Items/Issues

Nil

AGENDA ITEM: 9

SUBJECT: Next Meeting

Time and Date of Next Meeting:

6 October 2010 at 1600hrs at Fairbairn (new ACTRFS HQ)